March is National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month

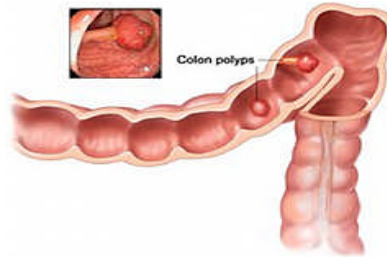### What is colorectal cancer?
Colorectal cancer is cancer of the colon (large intestine) or rectum.

If found early, colorectal cancer is treatable

Fact: Early colon cancer usually causes no symptoms, it is important to get screened before symptoms occur.

Fact: Even if there is no family history of colorectal cancer, it is still important to get screened because 75 -80% of colorectal cancer diagnosed occurs in people with no family history.

A polyp, which is a small growth of tissue, can form in body cavities including the digestive system. Polyps can be benign or malignant. During a colonoscopy polyps are removed and a biopsy is done to determine if they are a cancerous or non-cancerous growth.

Symptoms of colorectal cancer
- Bleeding from the rectum
- Blood in the stool
- Abdominal cramps or pain
- A change in bowel habits

Risk factors for colorectal cancer
- **Age:** Over 90% of colorectal cancers are found in individuals age 50 and older.
- **Family History:** People with a family history of colorectal cancer or polyps have an increased risk of developing colorectal cancer.
- **Personal History:** People with a personal history of inflammatory bowel disease (Ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease), adenomatous polyps, or cancer of the ovary or endometrium are at an increased risk for colorectal cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends the following guidelines to detect colorectal cancer early. Beginning at age 50, have one of the following tests:
- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year and flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years **or**
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years **or**
- Fecal occult blood test (FOBT) every year **or**
- Colonoscopy every 10 years **or**
- Double-contrast barium enema every 5 years

For more information please contact Harford County Health Department's Office of Cancer Prevention Services at (410) 612-1780 or visit the website at www.harfordcountyhealth.com.